

**35. Comments on DAB Software and Customer Service.**

1. Did not know you even existed as the DAB. Who develops training for the DAB? This area is sorely lacking, and is probably slowing down acceptance of the programs developed by the DAB, or at a minimum is not allowing for full use of the information in all your applications.
2. There still seems to be a huge detachment between software users and software makers. Tighten the bond.
3. Have never used DAB.
4. The rating above on satisfaction is biased high. WWA is a disappointment as deployed given the critical nature of the problems it addresses. SCAN would be used more if it were not such a resource hog. FFMP looks promising. LSR is too new to judge. While each one of these systems has merit the current hardware may not be able to fully support them until the LINUX platforms arrive. There is also the limitation of available screens and/or work stations to view/use them bearing in mind that the forecaster most likely has other routines and products which he/she favors. The effort to combine WWA and Warngen into a comprehensive scheme may have merit but the test will come in ease of use in a variety of situations. Aside from the usual beta testing I suggest that the programmer actually GO to a field station and get unfiltered feedback on what they are doing and how it applies to the programs they are trying to write. In the early days of Warngen the setup and internal configurations of that program were poorly documented at best and it took several field hands to actually spell out how this was done. It is a sad commentary on how the NWS sets priorities that the two programs which have direct bearing on our MAIN mission (life and property)..WWA and Warngen...are distributed to the field in a form which many find cumbersome to use and do not have some basic functionalities until Build xx or Patch yy. The ITO will help smooth some of the setup/configuration problems since one person is tasked to do that sort of thing. However, it must be emphasized that documentation of the software is a critical aspect of the process as well as maintaining a current web help site.
5. poor rating is due to my experiences with WWA and SCAN as documented above.
6. My answer here is colored by my experience with WWA. I may not really have enough information for a fair judgement. Certainly everybody I have had to chance to work with at DAB has been good.
7. Please take all comments in this survey as constructive criticism meant to help you improve applications for us in the field. It is a challenging task given the variety of users and complexity of AWIPS, and I appreciate that.
8. Not sure how I would contact them. Maybe we do, and don't know it. Need some more info on DAB.
9. I didnt even know we had a DAB? Whats the #? question 34, I couldnt undue an inadvertant click... i have no comment on 34... might have been good to have that n/a option in all questions... Anyway, thanks for the opportunity to comment... I know you mean well. Too bad we didnt have this for GFE/IFPS... Wow! All these buggy programs are adding up to field frustrations... Most accidents are not due to 1 problem, usually a multitude of adverse ops issues occur nearly simultaneously and I can see the same thing happening in NWS office ops.
10. Did not even know they exist, do not have their number. What do they do?
11. I am not sure who is the Decision Assistance Branch is and what they do. I have had dealings with NCF and Awips Software support which have been very helpful.

12. DAB has been very helpful in resolving problems. Although, I think more thorough instructions would help for the setup process. I frequent the mdl website instructions, but many times they are not up-to-date with the latest information and don't tell the whole story.
13. haven't used this
14. The software needs much more thorough testing before it is distributed to the field offices. To distribute an application such as the LSR that will not work if you have certain (common) Spotter locations in the Spotter Database is unacceptable.
15. we need better hardware in the field.
16. Don't put beta software in the field for mandatory operational use. Our job is forecasting, not debugging software. This is not to say that I don't respect your efforts. A lot of these decisions to put beta software into the field come from bureaucrats that have no idea what's going on. Having worked in D.C. twice in my career, I wouldn't be surprised if you are understaffed. I have always viewed manpower allocation as one of the main problems with NWS software development.
17. We do not always know when we are dealing with the DAB. The information at the top of this survey is great, and I did not know who was at the DAB before now. When CeCe and Laura called here earlier this winter to help us with a WWA problem, I thought they were with SST- until now. As a reminder, and for new folks who won't see this survey, could each of you attach a v-card to your e-mails indicating who you are, and what your position is in MDL?
18. Overall - help on the various MDL applications by this field office is un-acceptable. This would include IFPS (I assume) which we get relatively poor support.
19. New software is usually full of bugs and takes a long time to fix. People in the field do not have time to spend hours trying to debug these programs. Get it right the first time.
20. Much more time and effort needs to be spent getting the hardware & software to work well. We operational people have become conditioned to only expect mediocre performance from the applications and to not expect much improvement in the future, based on past experiences.
21. See comments on WWA. This application and the use of it in operations need to be rethought to make it more user friendly to the operational forecasters.
22. Never heard of the DAB.
23. I don't even know what DAB is.
24. In general, these critical software are distributed to the Field with too many operationally disruptive bugs. These disruptions too often occur during critical operations (e.g., establishing a Severe Thunderstorm/Tornado Watch or during Warning operations. SCAN is very valuable, but there was a time lag of one volume scan between the current time and the SCAN Table display (remedied in Build 5.2.2).
25. Sorry, but at the local level I was really not aware of the DAB per se. Most of your work arrives filtered through the local SOO. I have never read the AWIPS User Manual guides to the applicable software mentioned above.
26. Thank you for your efforts with these programs and taking time to listen to comments from the field. Carl

27. Taking note of what doesn't work, documenting it, and adding it to an enormous list of what will be fixed in a future build - is not very helpful. What WOULD be helpful is actually fixing the software. But I have NO confidence in MDLs ability to do so. All software touched by MDL turns into kludge" monstrosities of difficult-to-use GUIs that complicate what should be streamlined operations - or are so finicky and performance-bound that they are unusable. I think MDL should give up. Responsibility for software development should be give to others in our organization. For the good of the organization - PLEASE recognize that you have lost all credibility - and that you MUST give this responsibility to others."
28. Don't know what software they provide.
29. I have no idea what the DAB is or how we can use them.
30. little experience with DAB, no significant opinion
31. What is the DAB? I have not heard of it.
32. I had to mark poor" for question #34 just because of WWA. "
33. I haven't had to interact with the Decision Assistance Branch so I can't say how helpful they have been. The IT for our office has had to deal with them and he would be the one to grade there performance. Our IT has done a good job, though of getting most issues resolved.
34. My dissatisfaction with WWA far overshadows my satisfaction with SCAN. Haven't had much chance to use FFMP...so I don't have an opinion yet.
35. I am not aware of DAB's function in the area of asking for software assistance - and do not know how to contact them.
36. All the software takes too long to load. I know this is an HP hardware problem. Perhaps, when we are running everything off of Linux boxes I will use the software more intensively.
37. no experience.
38. I can not comment on the elements other than wwa, as I am not a user of those applications, and they were just emerging when I was still a forecaster. And, I have not needed to supply any local support for those programs.
39. Did not use the DAB...not aware of it.
40. Hopefully feedback (both good and bad) like you should be getting via this survey will actually allow MDL to see how their software is really viewed by the field.
41. Getting better, but some consolidation and coordination of software efforts must be reached this year. SCAN and FFMP are excellent diagnostic tools, especially with regard to their user configurability.
42. ONE QUESTION: WHEN IT COMES TIME TO FIX SOFTWARE, DOES THE SAME PROGRAMMER GET TO WORK ON 'HIS' PROGRAM? OR DO YOU PUT ALL THE PROGRAMMER'S NAMES IN A HAT AND PICK ONE? IT SEEMS THE PERSON 'FIXING' THE PROBLEM DID NOT UNDERSTAND THE PROGRAM. HE MAY HAVE SOLVED ONE LITTLE THING, BUT BROKE 6 OTHER THINGS, SOME OF THEM BIG.

43. Until we get WFO personell working with DAB, we will continue to get software that is either not user friendly, not applicable to reality at a WFO or not ready to be released to the field (too many bugs etc).
44. Even though I rate the software as poor, I do think that pressure from HQ to rush programs out to the field may have a lot to do with the poor quality of the programs which have lead to increased stress and inefficiency in the field offices.
45. I am under the impression that the software is developed with little consultation from NWS WFO meteorologists/forecasters. The lack of documentation and training for NWS WFO meteorologists/forecasters supports this assertion. The programs continue to be learned through use, and all possible/optimal uses for each program have not been explored, due to the lack of documentation and training. The instability of each program is another obstacle to optimal use of each program.
46. The concepts are good, but it's clear that the software is deployed to the field before it's ready and without enough field testing and integration of suggestions. What makes matters worse is that WSH mandates the use of some of the software (ie. WWA) before the software is ready.
47. I have not had an opportunity to work with DAB customer service.
48. was not aware there was DAB customer service available. Is it available 24 hours a day?
49. in 33, I'm not sure what level of customer service is available from DAB. I can't answer it, because I may have needed help, but didn't ask DAB for it because I didn't know I could.
50. Thanks for the opportunity to chime in. The WWA issues do lead to frustration in the forecast ranks. If you can somehow merge the various components of WWA, XNOW and Riverpro (I'd leave warngen alone - that's a wonderful tool for short term warnings), you will be loved by all! Good luck - and WFO BOX isn't afraid of being a test site for ya either!
51. It takes too long for all of these features to reach the field. Please try to speed up the process. Thanks.
52. I am not a programmer so I don't know how difficult some of these programs are to write. I do know we sometimes ask a lot of the programs. But I think some of them could be much more user friendly, and not need 2-3 pages of instructions to have to look through before using them. Maybe some of my difficulties have happened because I have only been in the weather service for a year and a half and am still new with many of the procedures.
53. Clearly need MUCH more field input into software design. Also need to develop test software on hardware that is loaded the same as the field. I'd bet it's all run and tested on standalone systems that doesn't have the load that a field setup has, and that the development hardware has considerably more speed/memory than what is in the field. If we can't run it in the field, it's worthless.
54. Do not know who they are.
55. If all the programs were as good as FFMP...I would love to give a very good" rating...but WWA and SCAN have caused so many problems in the past...that I feel I must give a "poor" rating. Most of my bitterness lies with WWA...as I have seen many watches, warnings or advisories sent way late or with errors due to that software. SCAN is a great idea...but SOMEONE REALLY NEEDS TO ADDRESS SYSTEM PERFORMANCE IF THESE APPLICATIONS ARE TO BE USED SUCCESSFULLY!!!! Any more...AWIPS is like a dial-up connection the Internet."

56. Do they" interact with the "real field"...not the "golden users" but real average Joe and Jane folks. We NEVER are asked what we want but are told what we need. What arrogance!! This is what the average field person knows because its a daily reality...has been forever. Violates every management principle there is. Resignation and frustration are what we accept with most software...and incorrect and incomplete documentation and training. For once...like to see something work like ROC/OSF. You asked...you got it...and this view is unanimous in our office and numerous folks in other offices are nearly identical. I applaud you asking...through may not like the tune of the song playing...but again you created it."
57. HAVE NOT USED DAB CUSTOMER SERVICE.
58. I have no idea what the Decision Assistance Branch is.
59. Can not comment. Have not used much. Have kept up on e-mails though.
60. Didn't know there was a customer service part to DAB. In general anything that comes out of FSL has been tested thoroughly and while not perfect will perform as advertised in an acceptable manner. MDL on the other hand sends out alpha or beta software that does not work as advertised, has incomplete (or nonexistant) documentation, and has not been tested other than in simple ideal conditions. WWA is known in the field as World's Worst Application.
61. WWA is such a user-unfriendly program that it (WWA) biases my entire view ot Decision Assistance Branch. WWA should be tossed out and a field-created XNOW-like program should be substituted. I have heard that there are Information Technology Officers who would be willing to create such a program.
62. HGX has not configured the LSR application yet, but my poor rating is based on HGX's experience with SCAN and WWA. SCAN is not a bad application in itself, but it can't hold a candle to the WDSS for capability, and the WDSS software is older and runs on a weaker hardware platform.
63. I have only used it once for a major WWA problem. They were unable to help much because of the poor quality of WWA overall, but they were as helpful as they could be and at least got our WWA back up and running.
64. under 34 d, sometimes unacceptable should be a choice.
65. Never even heard of the DAB.
66. I am not really certain if I have used the DAB. However, I have asked for help on particular WWA and/or WarnGen problems via e-mail and have gotten some really good feedback (especially from Iris Boon).
67. Feel that while the software is ok, it could be integrated and modernized much more than it is.
68. Neither poor nor acceptable". Perhaps "workable"... but needs to improve. "
69. POOR BASED ALMOST SOLELY ON WWA. MAYBE ANY RESOURCES BEING WASTED ON SCAN CAN BE BETTER USED TO HELP WWA.
70. WWA is very hard to work with. SCAN is too slow. FFMP is really helpful in flood and flash flood situations.
71. I'm confident the DAB is doing all it can to provide quality service to the field. The development cycle of software, however, is not sufficient to address known problems. What if DAB took a cue from FSL and developed a rapid prototype project for applications such as WWA, SCAN, and FFMP?

72. More input from the field is necessary. My sense is that these programs are being written by non-mets. I have yet to have some of my questions answered that I posted on the WWA listserver. This is poor and inexcusable if you ask me. If no one wants to listen to the field, then I guarantee you that the programs that you develop will not be used by many people (unless of course we are forced to use them). A little cooperation will go a long way.
73. What's a DAB? Software needs improvement. Training is inadequate.
74. Did not respond to this section, since I have not utilized LSR program personally yet.
75. Have not even heard of Decision Assistance Branch (DAB) Customer Service
76. I have not used DAB customer service.
77. I have not used the DAB. (In your questions, you may want to add a N/A" choice to your answers."
78. Question 33 was nearly impossible to answer -- this is the first time I even knew we could get help from DAB. The fact that most of the support" on AWIPSINFO and other sources -- not DAB -- speaks volumes of where y'all need to go with customer service. The solution is short, simple, and sweet -- but will require a complete paradigm change -- develop and deliver operationally critical software that is tested, well-documented, supported, and provided with extensive training."
79. Had to go up to Iris' level to resolve a mapping issue with AWIPS back in September 2002. Another example was NCF ticket #119960 that was forward from NCF to MDL about problems with the WWA application. I have not heard anything on the resolution of the problem.
80. Field Offices have ITO's and others that are good at programming. Their talents are not being used in software development. Programs are being written by the DAB in such a fashion that fixes can not be made at the local level. Why not incorporate the ITO's into this team and let them help with debugging software, assist in developing software, etc. To do this, ensure we loosen the reins on the code so this may be done.
81. I think my comments have said enough. Please take this as constructive but honest. I just think you need to feel the frustration that we are experiencing in the field. Thanks for allowing this opportunity to comment.
82. Software development needs to maintain close ties to what the field really needs. Communication between developers/programers and the end software users needs to be better.
83. There seems to be a HUGE void of field involvement when it comes to what the field needs and what the branch thinks that we need. Inappropriate programming languages are used and programs are FAR too complicated for the laymen forecaster. Communication is void between each programming group. There is also an observed animosity between FSL and MDL. Although the common goal should be to give the field the best possible software, it seems MDL is to arrogant to believe that others may have better ideas. It is to the point that many of my coworkers that are AWIPS knowledgeable have noted that if MDL does not adapt to the changing programming needs and environment, they will extinguish themselves right out of government service.
84. I am not a user because I am not a met. I am curious however why this was sent to the soo list. Maybe I read the to" wrong on this email but it seems to me that your real audience would be the real users. By sending this to the soo list and asking questions about training... what kind of response do you expect. Just a thought and I am probably all wet here but I would think you want to ask users of the system, not the soo's."

85. Thanks for any future efforts you undertake in developing all dissemination tools into one awesome, new application! If you take anything from my survey, please take that 'screaming message.' Thanks for listening:)
86. I don't like the WWA software at all, SCAN is OK and I don't use FFMP. I do believe the LSR program will be useful but I haven't used it yet.
87. I hate to be overly critical but I haven't really had the impression that these programs were written by someone who understood (or was concerned with) operations in the high workload WFO environment that has developed through the late 90s into the early 2000s, where split-second decision making amid high information input and product output has been the norm. Thus the decisions usually come at middle of a cascade of inputs when flexible decision making is paramount. The linear thought processes that dominate WWA just don't cut it ...especially for short-fused situations. Thus there continues to be an appeal for these WFO developed, low-overhead, non-AWIPS bound applications ...even while national policy tries to drive everything into a constrictive AWIPS box.
88. Training is virtually non-existent. It has been left to a forecaster who is incredibly dedicated and works incredibly hard, but I only see him at shift change. He's been given an impossible task. It's distressing that the Wx Service assumes we're all capable of self training in all the complex tools we have. The Wx Service is blessed with an extraordinary number of gifted, hard working people who make do with the lack of training and faulty software. Some of not as gifted are left to fear the day we face a life and death situation and can't get a warning out in time because of a software glitch.
89. Never heard of DAB until now.
90. It would be nice not to have the different warning systems. Then we who only use it on the average of once a month would not be as likely to forget how it works in between times. I think I even got WWA and WarnGen mixed up in this survey. WarnGen is the one that makes nice warnings with the call to action choices and cities on there. WWA was the confusing one that you have to cancel things and you can't do practice warnings without it going out to the world.
91. Do not use LSR program yet, see no need for FFMP, Scan is too slow, and WWA just does not cut it.
92. I like WWA. I do not like SCAN. FFMP is ok. LSR could be more user-friendly in terms of what options to select for the particular event.
93. FFMP and SCAN are still not used at CTP due to prior resource problems. With the latest build, the Service Hydrologist and I are planning on working more with FFMP. We will attempt to work with SCAN prior to and during this severe weather season, but we don't have much experience. Training has been limited to a copy of the SCAN document which was distributed. Self training, no formal training, but we will need to schedule some.

94. My overall comments are that the software produced by the group is very poor as is the support. A major factor is perhaps the leadership of this division. I have seen in email and in recent powerpoint presentations where the emphasis is on forecaster resistance to change and forecaster coding errors. I don't wish to make a big issue out of this but just look at this survey. We are years into WWA and this is the first one that I have seen, despite 3 years of complaints. Further look at how the survey appears" to the field... you list all your names first, then ask our opinions. To many this looks like you care little for our comments. This is the first survey I have ever seen with a list of names on top of it. It looks odd and maybe like your culture is really out of touch. The emphasis should be on what software is needed to eliminate these mistakes. What about a QC algorithym that runs when you hit xmit, highlights the errors and offers a way to remedy them BEFORE the customer sees them? This is where the credits go... at the bottom... not at the top. This is a small point but one that may signal a larger problem. ===== Decision Assistance Branch Team Dr. Stephan Smith - Branch Chief Iris Boon - Customer Service Watch Warning Advisory Application (WWA) System for Convection Analysis and Nowcasting (SCAN) Flash Flood Monitoring Prediction (FFMP) Local Storm Report Application (LSR) Mark McInerney - Project Lead Tom Filiaggi - Project Lead Sean Webb - Developer Michael Churma - Developer Laura Cutrer - Developer William Mattison - Developer James Lieu - Developer Dr. Lingyan Xin - Developer CeCe Mitchell - Developer Qinglu Lin - Developer Dr.Bei Wang - Developer JJ Gong - Developer Dr. Yanhua Feng - Developer"
95. At AFC in the OCONUS we don't fit the norm for WFO's therefore we seem to have more problems than the average WFO. DAB has worked very hard to help solve our problems.
96. At this time I am uncertain how to obtain help from the Decision Assistance Branch.
97. MAKE SURE EVERYTHING WORKS BEFORE YOU SEND IT TO FIELD. AND IF IT DOES WORK MAKE SURE IT IS EASY TO USE.
98. Never heard of this...
99. I am confused about the role of the NCF. Is it not their job to fix and troubleshoot AWIPS issues? When did MDL get into the Help Desk business? I didn't know until recently that there was such a branch and that they provided help. What are the rules regarding what type of help you will provide and during what hours? Are you available to all users at all levels? Are you available only when you can be reached? Who do we call? How do we contact you? Do we bypass the NCF and go directly to you? This information would be good to know. Hope this helps.
100. The implementation of software from the DAB is poorly thought out. The DAB should work out bugs before deployment to the field. Some of the problems are so obvious it is hard for me to believe that they slipped through the cracks. Also so called upgrades sometimes have the effect of rendering the software totally useless for long periods of time. This is completely unacceptable. The DAB needs to take the time to thouroughly test the software out so the field does not recieve garbage. How can we issue error free products is the software is hell bent on giving us error filled products to disseminate?
101. DAB is something new to me. In fact I just looked you up on the web and know I'm enlightened! In the fast-pased operational world, these things happen. In fact, I just polled the 4 other people in the operations area and nobody knew what DAB was. Is this a new name for an old department?
102. There seems to be too many layers to get help. The help works, but in general the bigger problems need to be addressed by developers and not a middle person.
103. When contacting DAB, contact was not even aware of what I was talking about, FFMP, and they were listed as the point of contact for particular issue. Had to be passed on to someone else.



104. Question 34.) With exception of WWA.
105. From your cover email you say you are committed to providing NWS field employees with state-of-the-art tools and software." Based on WWA and SCAN can you keep a straight face when you say that? You have a way to go to meet your commitment."
106. I AM UNFAMILIAR WITH THE DAB.
107. Please see the comment provided above re: WWA Hope that helps.
108. Sorry, never heard of Decision Assistance Branch.
109. I have no idea what DAB is. Thanks for the chance to comment. We need one streamlined system that incorporates everything.
110. I can't rate overall" satisfaction, since I am very dissatisfied with WWA, but some of the other software might be fine. "
111. -Ques 34 - except WWA. ===== Why was MDL working on the LSR program when this program was already on the LAD? You did the same thing with Aviation Workstation - the field already had a quite adequate version of Aviation Workstati
112. Have never called DAB customer service" and did not know it existed."
113. Sorry, but I have never heard of DAB until just now.